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JCP confirms 10 additional high court judges

• Extends tenure of two other SHC judges • Pir Masood Chishti elected PBC vice chairman; Munir A. Malik made executive committee chairman

By Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: On the second day of its meeting, the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) recommended the confirmation of 10 additional judges of the Sindh High Court (SHC) out of a total list of 12, by a majority of its total membership.

Presided over by Chief Justice of Pakistan Yahya Afridi, the JCP, after due consideration of the relevant data forms, antecedents and evaluation material placed before it, confirmed Justice Miran Muhammad Shah, Justice Ms Tasneem Sultana, Justice Riazat Ali Sahar, Justice Muhammad Hassan (Akber), Justice Abdul Hamid Bhurgi, Justice Jan Ali Junejo, Justice Nisar Ahmed Bhanbhro, Justice Ali Haider 'Ada', Justice Muhammad Osman Ali Hadi and Justice Muhammad Jaffer Raza as permanent judges of the SHC.

Meanwhile, the JCP also recommended the extension of two additional judges for another six months, namely Justice Khalid Hussain Shahani and Justice Syed Fiazul Hassan Shah.

The meeting was held at the conference room of the Supreme Court to make recommendations for the confirmation of additional judges as judges of the SHC, as well as for the reconstitution and extension of constitutional benches.

Similarly, the commission, by a majority vote, also nominated four judges to the constitutional bench of the SHC, besides extending the tenure of the constitutional benches by six months. The nominated judges are Justice Amjad Ali Bohio, Justice Muhammad Hassan (Akber), Justice Ali Haider 'Ada' and Justice Muhammad Osman Ali Hadi.

On Wednesday, the JCP will consider the confirmation of 10 additional judges of the Peshawar High Court.

Meanwhile, in a separate development, the 248th meeting of the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) elected Pir Muhammad Masood Chishti as the new vice chairman of the PBC for the year 2026 by a majority vote.

Presided over by Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan, who is also the chairman of the PBC, the meeting was held at the council's office in the Supreme Court building and transacted a number of items on the agenda.

While acting as the Returning Officer for the election, the AGP invited proposals for the post of vice chairman. In response, Farooq Hamid Naek proposed the name of Pir Muhammad Masood Chishti from Lahore, which was seconded by Syed Qalb-i-Hassan. On the other hand, Muhammad Maqsood Buttar proposed the name of Qazi Muhammad Arshad from Abbottabad as the other candidate.

Balochistan bar body condemns JCP decision: Page 5

Both Pir Muhammad Masood Chishti and Qazi Muhammad Arshad consented to the proposals of their respective candidature. As there was a contest, the election was held through a secret ballot. After the completion of the polling process, the ballot papers were taken out of the ballot box, counted and found to be 23 in number.

As per the count of the ballot papers, Pir Muhammad Masood Chishti secured 15 votes, while Qazi Muhammad Arshad obtained eight votes. Resultantly, the Returning Officer declared Pir Muhammad Masood Chishti as the elected vice chairman of the Pakistan Bar Council for the year 2026.

The council also elected Muneer A. Malik from Karachi as the chairman of the PBC executive committee for the year 2026.

Meanwhile, the PBC strongly condemned the campaign of character assassination against judges of the Lahore High Court and the Islamabad High Court on baseless allegations, terming it an attack on the prestige and dignity of the judiciary.

The council reiterated that the legal fraternity would never allow anyone to succeed in nefarious designs aimed at targeting judges.

FAISALABAD: Workers pack carrots for delivery to the vegetable market.—APP

Federal govt allows Punjab farmers to export potatoes, kinno via alternative routes

Move comes after CM Maryam intervenes on growers' complaints

By Zulqernain Tahir

LAHORE: The federal government has allowed farmers in Punjab to export potatoes and kinno through alternative routes, the Punjab government said on Tuesday, attributing the decision to Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's intervention.

"The federal government has allowed potato and kinno exports following the chief minister's special efforts," the provincial government said in a statement.

The move follows calls from Punjab's potato growers for urgent government support, including subsidised exports, after a production surplus coincided with weak domestic demand and shrinking export prospects.

Farmers had blamed months-long disruption in trade through the Afghanistan border for a sharp decline in potato prices, saying rates had fallen below production costs in parts of Sahiwal, Okara, Pakpattan, Kasur and adjoining districts. Some growers, they said, had ploughed standing crops back into the soil to avoid further losses.

In a statement, CM Maryam Nawaz said the hard work of potato and kinno farmers would not be allowed to go to waste.

"I remain in contact with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to help farmers overcome their difficulties," she said, adding that the Punjab government had approached the Centre for the formation of a high-level committee to facilitate exports of kinno and potatoes.

She said the committee, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, would include representatives of relevant ministries and key stakeholders to address the issue in a coordinated manner.

The chief minister said the province had also urged the Centre to explore new international markets and reduce export-related costs to ease difficulties faced by exporters and farmers.

"Practical measures are being taken on a daily basis to resolve issues related to kinno and potato exports and to maximise foreign exchange earnings," she said.

She said Punjab produced about 95 per cent of the country's potatoes and kinno.

She added that potato output in the province was expected to reach about 12 million tonnes this year, while kinno production was projected at four million tonnes.

New polio case takes 2025 tally to 31

By Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: The tally of polio cases for 2025 reached 31 on Tuesday after a sample collected last year in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's North Waziristan district tested positive.

The Polio Eradication Programme said in a statement that the Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health (NIH), Islamabad, had confirmed a case of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) in North Waziristan.

"This is the fifth case reported from North Waziristan in 2025, bringing the total number of polio cases in Pakistan for the past year to 31," it said.

Meanwhile, an official from the lab said that the case was included in the list for 2025 as the sample was collected last year.

"It takes up to three weeks to confirm that a child has been affected. There are some more samples in the lab which are being analysed and, in case of confirmation, the tally for 2025 may further increase," he said.

He added that wild poliovirus was detected in a four-month-old girl from Union Council Spinwam-2 in North Waziristan.

"The onset of symptoms began in December and subsequent samples collected from her were positive for WPV1. Therefore, this is the 31st case of 2025," he said.

"Last year, Pakistan reported 20 cases from KP, nine from Sindh, and one each from Punjab and Gilgit-Baltistan," he added.

In a statement issued last month, the country's polio eradication programme noted that the overall trend showed a decline in positive detections of poliovirus compared to 2024, but circulation persisted in certain high-risk areas.

Polio is a highly infectious and incurable disease that can cause lifelong paralysis. The only effective protection is through repeated doses of the oral polio vaccine for every child under five during each campaign, along with the timely completion of all essential immunisations.

Unity, consensus on matters of security need of hour: ISPR DG

Clerics express solidarity with armed forces, reaffirm resolve to counter anti-state propaganda

Dawn Report

RAWALPINDI: Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said on Tuesday that unity and consensus on matters of national security and narrative is the need of the hour.

The ISPR chief made the remarks during an interaction with a delegation of clerics who comprise the National Paigham-i-Aman Committee (NPAC), led by its Chairman Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi.

He emphasised that unity and consensus on matters of national security and narrative are the need of the hour

A comprehensive discussion was held during the meeting on internal security challenges in the context of the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan and Tehreek-i-Taliban Afghanistan, which further strengthened the shared stance of all stakeholders.

Reiterating Islamabad's principled position on Kashmir and Gaza, the DG ISPR said that supporting oppressed people is Pakistan's moral responsibility.

He stressed that public awareness and a truth-based narrative are decisive tools in countering the enemy's psychological warfare.

Terming the meeting highly productive, the DG ISPR expressed the hope for further progress in building trust and enhancing practical cooperation in the days ahead.

The NPAC delegation expressed its solidarity with the armed forces of the country and reaffirmed its collective resolve to counter anti-state narratives and hostile propaganda.

Assuring full cooperation in promoting the national narrative, the committee strongly condemned Fitna al Khawarij as well as the Afghan Taliban, stressing that terrorism has no justification under any circumstances.

The NPAC also announced plans to disseminate the message of Islamic unity, social harmony and constitutional equality across the country through mosques and other religious platforms.

Members of the delegation agreed to adopt a zero-tolerance policy against hate speech and sectarianism. The committee also proposed enhancing awareness and guidance sessions in mosques, seminaries and universities to effectively promote the state narrative.

The DG ISPR's meeting comes less than a week after Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Asim Munir emphasised the army's zero-tolerance policy towards any threat to national security.

The CDF made the remarks while addressing officers during a visit to Lahore garrison, where he also reaffirmed the military's resolve to respond to evolving challenges with professionalism and determination.

Protesters block KKH over delay in water supply project

By Jamil Nagri

GILGIT: Residents of Nasirabad in Hunza on Tuesday staged a protest sit-in, blocking the Karakoram Highway (KKH) against delays in the completion of a water supply scheme from Minapin in Nagar, Gilgit-Baltistan.

Protesters alleged that thousands of fruit and non-fruit trees had dried up and crops over thousands of acres of agricultural land were damaged due to water shortages. A large number of local residents staged an indefinite sit-in at Nasirabad, blocking the KKH.

They said Nasirabad valley has been facing a shortage of water, particularly during the summer season, for a long time. The local population depends on agriculture and fruit trees as their main source of income. Last year, acute water shortages severely affected crops and fruit orchards.

According to the protesters, a water supply scheme from Minapin to Nasirabad in Hunza was approved 15 years ago to address the issue. However, they alleged that despite the passage of 15 years, the pipeline-based water supply scheme has not been completed.

Baba Jan, a leader of the Gilgit-Baltistan Awami Workers Party and a resident of the area, said the livelihoods of local people have suffered for many years. "Fruit trees, including blackberry, cherry, apricot and other unique varieties in the valley, have dried up. Crops, which are the backbone of the local economy, were badly damaged last year due to the unavailability of irrigation water," he said.

He added that the water supply scheme, initiated 15 years ago, had completed about 90 per cent of its work, but was later revised. The revised project requires approval from a Gilgit-Baltistan CWP meeting; however, for the past three years, it has not been included in the meeting's agenda.

Another protester, Wajid Baig, said local residents were also facing difficulties in accessing water for drinking and daily use. Protesters pointed out that while the GB government claims to promote plantation and the billion tree project, agricultural land and thousands of trees grown by local people are suffering due to water shortages.

They said they had repeatedly met officials and requested intervention, but no action was taken. The protesters staged the sit-in on the KKH despite temperatures dropping to minus eight degrees Celsius. Traffic remained suspended for several hours; however, in the evening, the road was opened for an hour to allow stranded tourists and emergency vehicles to pass.

The protesters warned that if practical work on the project does not start this year, half of the village could be completely destroyed agriculturally, further worsening the local economy and living conditions. They appealed to the caretaker chief minister to take immediate notice of the situation and direct the relevant departments to start work on the water supply project on an emergency basis.

They said the sit-in would continue until a notification is issued to begin work on the water project.

RESIDENTS of Nasirabad stage a protest sit-in against delay in completion of a water supply project.—Photo by the writer

FCC endorses cooperative federalism in ruling on excise duty tweaks

Attock Cement's challenge to BHC verdict dismissed

By Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) on Tuesday ruled that a federal law imposing excise duty and a provincial law aimed at advancing labour welfare, though overlapping in scope, do not conflict with each other and instead operate within their respective spheres of legislative competence, rendering both constitutionally valid.

"Both enactments stand on firm constitutional footing, not in conflict but in constitutional harmony, each valid in its own aspect," observed Justice Aamer Farooq, who headed a two-judge FCC bench that dismissed a challenge filed by Attock Cement Pakistan Ltd against amendments introduced by the Balochistan government to a federal excise law.

In its 15-page verdict, the court explained that while the imposition of excise duty squarely falls within federal legislative competence, the advancement of labour welfare, when viewed from the perspective of public interest, lies well within the provincial domain.

The controversy at hand revolved around a petition instituted by Attock Cement Pakistan Ltd, an entity engaged in the production and sale of cement, with its manufacturing facility located at Hub, Lasbela, Balochistan. The petition challenged a Nov 27, 2023 order of the Balochistan High Court.

The petition was initially filed before the Supreme Court but was later transferred to the newly established FCC following the enactment of the 27th Amendment.

On Jan 15, 2021, the factory was served with a notice by the Mines Labour Welfare Department, Balochistan, requiring payment of excise duty on minerals to the Labour Welfare Commissioner, Balochistan, at rates revised pursuant to the Balochistan Finance Act, 2020.

In response, the factory submitted three separate representations to the department, seeking revision of the applicable rates. However, all three representations were declined.

During the hearing before the FCC, counsel for the factory, Khurram M. Hashmi and Noman A. Farooqi, argued that the provincial assembly, by amending Section 3 of the Excise Duty on Minerals (Labour Welfare) Act, 1967 through Section 7 of the Balochistan Finance Act, 2020, had acted without legislative competence. They contended that the imposition of excise duty fell within the exclusive federal legislative domain and that the Balochistan Assembly therefore lacked the authority to amend the 1967 Act, particularly where such amendment effectively altered the rate or nature of excise duty.

However, in the judgement, Justice Farooq observed that the objective of the Labour Welfare Act, 1967 was unmistakably oriented towards the advancement of labour welfare, a domain constitutionally entrusted to the provinces.

The mechanism through which this objective is pursued — the imposition of a duty of excise — is not an end in itself but a means carefully designed to finance a broader public interest. The statute, the judgment noted, does not merely levy a tax; rather, it establishes an administrative framework for the collection, allocation and utilisation of the proceeds, all of which are inextricably linked to the welfare of labour employed in the industry.

Thus, while the recovery of excise duty constitutes the operative mechanism of the Act, its spirit, essential character and constitutional essence lie in the realisation of labour welfare. The excise duty, the court held, is instrumental in achieving this predominant provincial objective, rendering the Act, in its true nature, an expression of social welfare legislation rather than mere taxation.

Even if, by a strict reading of the preamble and operative provisions of the 1967 Act, its dominant character were to be construed as the collection and imposition of excise duty, its underlying purpose could not be ignored. Such a conclusion, the court said, merely reveals an overlap between two constitutional competences: the federal authority to levy excise duty and the provincial responsibility to advance labour welfare.

This incidental overlap, the judgment added, does not justify invalidating the statute. Justice Farooq emphasised that the Constitution (Eighteenth Amendment) of 2010 consciously embraced the ethos of cooperative federalism, wherein legislative fields are not rigid silos but, at times, interacting spheres.

In this constitutional landscape, incidental overlap does not render a statute ultra vires. The court further observed that following the 18th Amendment, the Concurrent Legislative List was abolished, significantly expanding provincial legislative authority, with matters not explicitly listed in the Federal Legislative List falling within the exclusive domain of the provinces.

The FCC also acknowledged the traditional use of the "pith and substance" doctrine in determining legislative competence, noting that courts have increasingly relied on the "double aspect" doctrine, which permits a single subject to be legislated upon by both federal and provincial governments from different perspectives.

In the end, the FCC denied leave to appeal and dismissed the petition filed by the cement manufacturer.